



THE NATIONAL PREACHER.

Vol. XXXVIII.]

APRIL, 1864.

Whole No. 918.

SERMON VII.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH F. TUTTLE, D. D.,

PRESIDENT OF WABASH COLLEGE, CRAWFORDSVILLE, INDIANA.

THE CHURCH THE BIRTHPLACE OF SOULS.

"AND of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her."—PSALM 87: 5.

THIS is a psalm of triumph, written, as some suppose, to be sung when Jerusalem was delivered from the Assyrians during the reign of Hezekiah. In an elevated strain the Psalmist celebrates Jehovah's love for Zion, the city of God. Glorious things, predictions, and promises had been spoken in that honored city, things which were certain to be fulfilled. Among these, as mentioned in the fourth and sixth verses, was the fact that Zion was to be the birthplace of nations, the city of their spiritual nativity. Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia are mentioned as representing all nations who were to be converted to God through an agency of which Zion was the chief seat, the home. The time was to come when the nations, instead of besieging and assaulting Jerusalem to destroy her, would be joyfully named by them as their spiritual birthplace. In the fifth verse, the same imposing

idea is presented in regard to persons; of individuals it would be true as just asserted of nations: "And of Zion it shall be said that this and that man were born there." This was named as the chief glory of Zion, and in consequence of this, it is further asserted that "the Highest himself shall establish her."

In the largest and most imposing sense, the true Zion is the Church universal on earth, including all Christ's believers, without respect to ecclesiastical distinctions. The Zion of Hezekiah was the brilliant symbol of a diviner Zion, the Universal Church, in which is to be realized the regeneration of the nations. This Zion in the fullest sense is ordained of Jehovah to be the spiritual birthplace of nations. Here or nowhere, by this agency or by none, is the world to be converted, and the whole creation groaning and travailing together in pain until now, to be delivered from its bondage of corruption.

But descending from this grand generalization of the Church catholic, we may select the individual Church which is held together by a common faith in Christ, by a mutual love among its members, and a polity to which all submit as upon the whole, and in their circumstances the best through which they can carry forward the great purposes for which the Church was instituted. Such a church is local, and includes numbers so limited that its members are well known to one another. It may be independent of other similar churches, or it may be a part of an organized church or denomination, whose will in certain well-defined respects is the law of the whole, and of each of its parts. Such a church includes in its congregation more or less of persons who are unconverted, and is in immediate contact with portions of the world who may be savingly affected through this agency. Now as Zion was the seat and the symbol of the ancient religion, and as the Temple was the most sacred spot in Zion as a city, and where the outward rites of that religion were celebrated, so without any far-fetched figure we may say that the meeting-house, the church-edifice, is the Zion, the home of this individual Church. There God's people meet to worship him, to hear the Gospel preached, and to sing the high praises of Jehovah; there they meet to remember Christ in the ordinance of his own appointment, and to receive those blessed impulses which are so effectual in helping them on to a meeting with the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are written in heaven. It is the place of which the believer says: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord: My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. . . . I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness!" (Ps. 84: 1, 2, 10.) Indeed, as the seat and home of those heaven-ordained agencies by which sinners are regenerated, the Church where God's people meet may not inaptly

be described in the language of the text: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man were born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her." I propose to discourse to you at this time concerning the CHURCH AS THE BIRTHPLACE OF SOULS. And in the first place let me discuss that great event called the soul's birth.

Literal birth is the beginning of a new existence, designed to be one of expanding strength and happiness. As contrasted either with non-existence or annihilation, existence is regarded as very desirable. Except under the coercion of remorse, or of some other intolerable anguish, no one wishes he had never been born, or that he may be forever blotted out of existence. Birth is the beginning of this state universally regarded as desirable. It is true, it is a period of helpless weakness and dependence, yet if not hindered by some misfortune, that feeble beginning may be developed into the manly beauty of David or the brawny force of Hercules.

There is a sense in which the natural birth is to be regarded as an event of the highest importance, because in the present condition of things it is not only the beginning of physical existence, but the necessary condition of the intellectual and moral birth. Of the happiness which the natural birth brings to parents, to society, and the new-born, I need not now speak.

But there is such an event as intellectual birth, which, in itself, is nobler and more important than the physical. When the mind begins to open, so as to apprehend the simplest ideas, in a sense that mind experiences a birth, which is the beginning of a new existence. Each new idea acquired, all fresh combinations of old elements into new forms of thought, each addition of strength enabling the mind to mount up as on eagle's wings, running without weariness, and walking without faintness, until it aspires to companionship with Plato and Bacon, is but the development of that existence to which the intellectual birth introduced it.

It is also true of certain persons that they have lived for years in a sort of perfunctory intellectual way; their reason has been either reluctant or languid, their perceptions dull, their imagination leaden-winged, and their mental appetite sickly, when by contact with some gifted mind, or some learned institution, or some exigency requiring forces and faculties, the very existence of which they have been hitherto profoundly ignorant, they have experienced an intellectual regeneration as marvelous as the blind man experienced when Jesus anointed his eyes. Faculties and energies and aspirations, as by magic, come to light, scarcely more to the surprise of others than themselves. With this, often comes light on the vexed question of a pursuit in life. The man who has vainly tried to master the law finds suddenly his life-work to be in the beautiful proportions and fitnesses of architecture; the plain Oliver Cromwell finds that plows and soils and fruits and stocks are not his

business, but the leading of armies and the management of a kingdom; and the law-student at Gamaliel's feet finds that his work is not merely to preach the faith he once destroyed, but with his peerless pen to give that faith its proper dogmatic statements and logical defenses.

In innumerable cases, men have experienced this marvelous intellectual change, which has made them a wonder to themselves and to others, and this change is most significantly hinted in that flash of genius which we have in the indorsement which a celebrated modern author wrote on the title-page of some manuscripts composed when he was young: "The follies that I committed before my birth."

The vast results dependent on this intellectual birth, whether in the simple form first stated, or in the latter more imposing form, are evident at a glance, and shall not delay us a moment in their exposition. Mounting by a natural gradation, we come to that moral change which our blessed Lord compared to birth, or rather, which, by an impressive metaphor, he called birth from above. This is the "new birth," which holds so prominent a place in evangelical theology. The very words of Jesus to Nicodemus, and the circumstances in which he spoke, show how important he regarded the change: "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." "Marvel not, that I said unto you, ye must be born again."

What is this new birth? Not the imparting any new physical, mental, or moral faculties to the sinner. After the new birth, the sinner has the same limbs, the same senses, the same body he had before. His perceptive powers, his ability to reason, and from admitted facts to derive new truths; his imagination, so important in its relation to the conception and practical power of truth; in a word, his intellect is just what it was before. The same is true of his moral nature. His sensibilities, not merely natural, but moral, making him susceptible of the feelings of approbation and disapprobation, and consequently of the feelings of moral obligation, are not changed. Before the new birth he had a conscience, which, in greater or less power, praised him when he did right, thus making him happy, and reprobated him when he did wrong, thus making him unhappy. Before the new birth, the sinner had the power of choice; he was not shut up by an unavoidable necessity to choose only one thing or one way, and that the wrong one. There was no wrong choice he ever made in his life, when he was not conscious that he had the ability, and was therefore under the most positive obligation to make a right choice.

Nor yet is this new birth a formal union of the sinner with the Christian Church by baptism. Judas was undoubtedly baptized, yet Jesus said of him to his disciples: "One of you is a devil." (John 6: 70.) Simon Magus also was in proper form introduced

into the Church by baptism at the hands of Philip, and yet Peter said to this baptized man: "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God." (Acts 8: 13, 21.) Both these bad men were baptized in due form, and yet neither one after baptism had experienced the new birth. And alas! how many like them have enjoyed all the privileges of Christ's visible Church, and yet neither in the judgment of charity nor of themselves is there any evidence of their having experienced that surprising and necessary change spoken of by our blessed Lord as the new birth!

What then is the new birth? Previous to this change the soul is destitute of the supreme love of God as a controlling motive of life. God says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" but man by nature refuses obedience to this command. The love of self takes throne which belongs only to the love of God. He loves self supremely, but "God is not in all his thoughts." He plans for himself, thinks for himself, works for himself, lives for himself, as a supreme reason, utterly banishing, as that supreme reason of life, the love he owes to God. Out of this wicked heart, estranged from God, flow our wicked thoughts and vile affections and depraved actions.

The new birth consists in exorcising the heart of self as a supreme motive of life, and enthroning therein the love of God. In a word, the new birth is the birth of supreme love to God in the sinner's heart, so that now he shall aspire perhaps feebly, but really to the fulfillment of the command, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" or rather to the original command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This change in the governing motive of the soul penetrates and pervades the entire moral nature, and indirectly the mental and even the physical powers. The latter, up to this point, have been the servants of sin; they now become the instruments of righteousness. The body ceases to be a temple of Satan, and becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost. The mental faculties are so clarified that they now perceive the truths to which hitherto they were blind, and they become an instrumental agency through which motive kindles the moral sensibilities into a glow, and arouses the feeling of obligation into a force which the Apostle well describes: "The love of Christ constraineth us." The soul's affections are rectified, purified, and strengthened. The will is also inclined to choose the right way; the fear as well as the love of the Lord presses upon it to make in all things a right choice especially, the great, generic choice of enthroning the love of God in the heart as its supreme motive. In a word, the new birth effects such a change in the moral nature, that its subject, with more or less confidence, is able to say of God, whom he loves supremely: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth whom I desire besides thee." Such is that birth of the soul to which the

Psalmist refers in the text: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her."

In the second place, let me remark the soul's new birth is the greatest work ever effected among men, even by the Almighty. I desire not to speak extravagantly, and therefore you will indulge me in the attempt to justify the statement, which amounts to this, that God's grandest work among men is the conversion of a wicked soul into a good soul. The creative power of God transcends our conception. The statement in the Bible, "Let there be light," was pronounced by an ancient critic to be one of the most sublime ever made. Suppose one had been with God when from nothing he evoked the creation which we now see; above, beneath, on every side was space, in which brooded nayless darkness. There was not an atom of matter, not a single, simple element, not a ray of light. It was empty space. When man would build a house, however humble it may be, he must gather his materials from the quarry, the clay-bed, the iron mine, and the forest. Man can not create. He can only put into new forms materials ready to his hand. The inventor of some new power or machine is not its creator. He, by careful observation, detects some principle so obvious that we wonder how it could have eluded the observation of men so long. The man of genius whom we laud uses facts and forces which were about him, but he can not create an atom of dirt, or a pin, or a rain-drop. When we thus by the creative standard measure man, he sinks to utter nothingness. God gathered no materials from the hidden stores of other systems with which to build this. The poet finely renders this matter:

"Nature, whence sprang thy glorious frame?
My Maker called me, and I came."

How sublime the account! "God created the heaven and the earth;" "Let there be light;" "Let there be a firmament;" "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven." Here was creative power. In the midst of empty space, God says, "Let there be," and light flashes through the darkness; the sun is placed in the midst of the firmament; the earth and the stars, the plants and the animals, all come forth. "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty; who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain; who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; who maketh the clouds his chariots; who walketh upon the wings of the wind; who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flame of fire; who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever." I do not under-rate God's work in creation in saying this was an effort of omnipotence, put forth to realize, in a material universe, the plan which infinite wisdom had devised. The least of God's works excite our

wonder, as much, perhaps, as the greatest. We gaze in speechless admiration upon the prairies, spread out like a limitless ocean, or on the mountains, which have been piled up in their sublime majesty; yet with scarcely less admiration do we behold the little flower or the wing of the least insect. The telescope and the microscope, opening to our gaze "the magnitudes" of the universe, do but testify to the greatness of the Creator.

And yet this is almightiness in a domain where there is no obstacle. Here by "the word of his power" all things are made. Not so in that work which God had to do when he undertook to convert a wicked soul into a good one; a human soul, now a Satan's temple, into one fit to be a temple of the Holy Ghost. Here mere omnipotence is out of its proper sphere, since the work to be done is to make an unwilling soul a willing one, a condemned soul a pardoned one. Here the Almighty can not say, "Let it be done," as when creating the heaven and the earth; justice, eternal and immutable, forbids it. It points to the law which has been transgressed by the sinner, and to the declaration of Him who can not lie: "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Justice, with uplifted sword and with brow made terrible by frowns deep as the shadows of death, demands how even God, with all his omnipotence, can justify the sinner? We see at once that the problem of creating a world is as nothing in its difficulties compared with that of the new creating a wicked soul. But grant that justice can be satisfied by some expedient which shall preserve God's law and honor immaculate, how is God to overcome the sinner's hostility to him? "The carnal mind is enmity to God; it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." God by an act of power can annihilate the sinner; but can he compel the sinner full of enmity to love him? And thus the entire work of the soul's new birth is environed with the most formidable difficulties, in comparison with which all acts of mere omnipotence sink into insignificance. But oh! how glorious it is when done! because then a wicked soul becomes a good one, a pernicious soul a useful one, an ugly soul a beautiful one, a defiled soul a clean one, a wretched soul a happy one, a hateful soul a lovely one, a dead soul one that is alive, a soul that is an heir of hell an heir of heaven; in a word, a soul which was doomed to an eternal damnation into one that is beatified with an eternal salvation.

Hence, I reiterate the assertion that the soul's new birth is the greatest as well as most glorious of all the works effected among men even by the Almighty God.

Let me, in the third place, remark on the means by which God effects this greatest of his works.

The answer to this question of means also illustrates the topic just considered, but for the sake of distinctness, we will consider the means by themselves. They belong to two great classes—the di-

vine and the human. The former includes each person of the adorable Trinity. Let me state this matter in heaven's own rhetoric. God the Father is to be included as one of the forces or agents, producing the soul's new birth, for "God so loved the world," etc. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is said to have begotten the Christian into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

God the Son is also an agent in the same wonderful and difficult work. He undertook in himself to solve the problem of human redemption. He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He became in all respects a man, and in that condition suffered what the sinner deserved. God punished him as a sinner because he had taken the sinner's place. God loved and saved the sinner as though he were righteous, because, while Christ had taken his place, the sinner had in this respect taken Christ's place. It was a double imputation of the sinner's guilt to Christ, and Christ's righteousness to the sinner; a double interchange of reward and penalty, the infliction of the sinner's penalty on Christ, and the bestowment of Christ's reward on the sinner. So it is written by the Holy Ghost: "Who hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

This is the "Christ crucified" of whose office the Apostle makes so much; this is the grand and, so far as we are informed, the only means by which it is possible for the sinful soul to experience the new birth; and the means illustrate, in the most startling manner, both the difficulty and the glory of the achievement.

God the Spirit is also an agent in this work. Our Lord represents this means as essential, and the Apostles are unanimous in declaring that as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, and because of this, men are warned not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. The sinner is awakened, converted, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit; the dead sinner is made alive by the Holy Spirit; the wicked soul is renewed into a good soul by the Holy Spirit.

This presents the divine part of the means employed in the soul's new birth. Let us now look at the human. It is summed up in the preaching of "Christ and him crucified." This general statement is divisible into many included particulars, of which we have not time to speak. Hence, when our Lord had finished his work, and would make it effective in the salvation of sinners, he said to his Apostles: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Hence, the Apostle declares it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; and further, this is the reason why he said: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to every one that believeth."

Behold the means of the soul's new birth! Men, compared to earthen vessels, have this treasure committed to them, and they are commanded to preach to sinners a gospel which tells them how God the Father loved them, how God the Son died for them, and how God the Spirit renews them. Men who themselves have experienced this new birth, are to go to sinners with such a gospel; they are to be in earnest; they are to entreat sinners, to teach sinners, to warn sinners, and to win sinners, even as the greatest of preachers did, with argument, appeal, holy guide, tears, eloquence, even as he himself said: "I am made all things unto all men that I might by all means save some."

In the fourth place, the Psalmist gives this most glorious and difficult achievement which we have been discussing a local habitation: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her."

The birthplace of great men and great deeds has ever been a matter of lively interest. Twelve cities contended for the honor of being the place of Homer's nativity. How eagerly do we consult the books to learn where this and that great man was born! With what a thrill of emotion do we say, here is the place where Magna Charta was given to the barons; or, in this place was passed our Declaration of Independence; or, in this was fought the critical battle of the Revolution! This sacredness of place was the main element of that enthusiasm which produced the Crusades; and what think you must be the feelings of the traveler as for the first time he looks on Zion, the city of the great King, and the memories of the men and the deeds which haunt the locality come trooping upon him! and especially as he thinks of the Man of Sorrows!

No one can think of his own birthplace with indifference. Now that surprising change, the soul's new birth, may literally take place in the home where family piety dwells, or in the field, or shop, or study, where industry toils, or in the crowded thoroughfare, or in some place of seclusion where the anxious spirit is meditating on the most momentous of all questions: "What must I do to be saved?" Very sacred are these natal spots of the soul—they can never fade from our memory or our love!

But there is a sense in which the Church is the soul's birthplace. As an instrumentality, the preaching of the Gospel is heaven's chief agency in effecting individual and social regeneration. Pious individuals do not produce the preaching of the Gospel, but instrumentally the preaching of the Gospel produces the pious individuals. The Church is not the first in the order of time and the preaching second, but exactly the reverse. Thus in primitive times the Apostles preached, and, as a consequence, churches sprang into existence. Now it is true there is such a thing as preaching from house to house, and in private to single persons,

but the idea of preaching as a permanent agency is associated principally with a place set apart to that exercise.

There are two distinct views of the house of worship. The first regards it as a place for seeing certain ceremonies which are performed in the presence of the congregation—this is the Roman Catholic idea. The other regards the house of worship as a place in which people both worship the Lord and hear his words. In the Jewish economy the temple was the place for the sacrifices and rites; the synagogue the place in which the people heard the Scriptures read and expounded. The Protestant idea of a house of worship combines the temple and the synagogue. There the most solemn rites of religion are performed—baptism and the Lord's Supper; and there in the highest sense the Gospel is preached not before the people, but to them. There the word of God is read, the law unfolded, the fundamental facts in man's moral condition stated and proved; there is proclaimed God's holiness as a moral governor, and man's total sinfulness as a moral being; there is proclaimed not only man's sinfulness, but God's amazing mercy and the cost of its exercise; there are proclaimed the love and compassion of Christ, and his entreaties to sinners to be saved; there Sinai is unveiled in all its appalling terrors and Calvary in all its entrancing loveliness; there is depicted with tearful and solicitous tenderness the perdition of ungodly men and the rest which remaineth for the people of God; in one word, there, in the Christian meeting-house or church, is preached, in all its length, and breadth, and height, and depth, the love of God to sinners, as presented in a Gospel the central fact of which is Christ crucified. This is the place in which the Gospel peculiarly is preached, the place which is the seat or home of all those instrumental agencies by which God effects the soul's new birth. Here the terrors of the law scare men; here the love of the Gospel woos them; here they cry out, "What must we do?" and here they cast themselves on an all-sufficient Saviour in all the raptures of a new love, a new faith, a new life; here they avouch the Lord to be their God in a profession of their allegiance to Christ as their King; here they are baptized, and here they remember Jesus in the ordinance of his appointment, with unaffected sensibility partaking of the emblems which represent his broken body and shed blood; here they lavish their love on those who love Christ and one another; here they gather strength for conflict and comfort for trial; here they mature their graces, until hope becomes fruition and faith is lost in the expected reality; here they come in the strength of manhood, as the sun mounts up to midday to gain energy for toil and for conflict; and here they come in the weakness of age, as the sun declines to its settings; here usually is the last place we see them in life, lingering at this sacred shrine with a fondness akin to that which the pilgrim feels as he is leaving his home for the last time; and here

we bid farewell to their remains which we are about to lay away until the resurrection. In brief, the Church is the Christian's spiritual birthplace and that of his children, the seat of those mighty instrumentalities through which sinners are led to God; the Church is the soul's birthplace, from which again and again, in never-ceasing repetition, the news goes up to the angels, who make heaven resound with their joy: He that was lost is found, he that was dead is alive. Hence the gladness, the hope, the gratitude with which we repeat the words: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her."

Thus we see how it is that the Church is the birthplace of souls, and this also imparts such thrilling interest to the act of dedicating a church-edifice to the worship of God. Such a house thenceforth becomes our spiritual home, our Zion. But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens can not contain him, how much less these houses which we build! (2 Chron. 6 : 18) "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isa. 66 : 1.) A poor and a contrite spirit is God's special temple, and yet he loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. What condescension it is that the Eternal Jehovah, the King of glory, should be willing to dwell in humble tabernacles which his people in reverence build for him! And as we think of his glory and power and dignity and holiness as the great God and the great King, well may we exclaim in the language of devout ecstasy: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." (Ps. 24 : 7-10.) Such an house thenceforth becomes the house of the Lord, built and dedicated not for the celebration of ostentatious rites and pompous ceremonies, but as a holy place in which the great congregation may meet to offer their supplications and sing their psalms of praise to the Lord their God, their Father, their Redeemer, and their Sanctifier; a holy place in which may be published a full, free, and infinitely glorious Gospel; a holy place in which sinners shall be visited with the power of a new Pentecost, wringing from them the cry, "What must we do?" a holy place in which, by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, awakened sinners shall be renewed, so that the Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man, yea, multitudes of men, were born there; a holy place in which God's little ones shall be trained for glory and his children shall be instructed, warned,

strengthened, comforted, and prepared to ascend to the temple of which Solomon's, that

"Mount of snow,
Fretted with golden pinnacles,"

was only a very faint type; a holy place which, as the years roll away, shall gather about its pulpit, and its communion-board, and its aisles, and its every pew, the tenderest and holiest associations of sinners here converted, saints here edified; of gracious displays of the divine power here made, of loved ones who once worshiped God here, and hence were rapt out of our sight to the world where the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary be at rest.

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only true God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON VIII.

BY REV. J. H. SEELYE,

PROFESSOR IN AMHERST COLLEGE.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—
MATT. 5: 48.

IF we were to ask what is this perfection, and should undertake to answer the inquiry by the highest light of natural religion, we should say: It is the perfection of love. Obscure as are many of the intimations which nature furnishes respecting its Author, they are yet sufficiently clear to indicate his goodness as his crowning glory. The wisdom and power which shine so resplendently in the natural creation, and the righteousness and holiness which have such impressive displays in the history of men, are but the expressions of love. In like manner the Bible points us, with only greater clearness, in the same direction. The remarkable prayer of Moses—I beseech thee, show me thy glory—the Lord answers by making all his goodness pass before his servant. "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." All these, whether the mercy that can pardon or the justice which must punish, are alike expressions of divine love. The goodness is the

central sun, and all the rest are rays to which it gives their light and glory.

So also in the New Testament, that which harmonizes and explains all other representations of the glory of God is the inspired statement of the Apostle: "God is love." But that this is the kind of perfection which our Saviour enjoins in the text is evident also upon other grounds. No other meaning would form a fitting conclusion to the argument of the preceding verses. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them which persecute you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The force of this "therefore," in its connection with the preceding passage, clearly indicates what kind of a perfection is here implied. Be ye therefore perfect—that is, perfect in this respect, perfect in love, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect in love.

But that assurance might be rendered even more than doubly sure, we have, in the Gospel according to Luke, (6 : 36,) the conclusion of this same portion of the Sermon on the Mount, stated in these words: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." There is no difference of meaning in the two expressions. The "perfection" of Matthew, and the "mercy" of Luke, are one and the same. They are each the perfection of love.

The text therefore means as though we should read it: "Be ye therefore love, even as your Father which is in heaven is love." But this does not explain the text. It only exchanges one word for another. We must gain the meaning of love in order to attain the full force of this injunction.

What then is love?—a word most easy to our lips, but most difficult to our apprehension. Perhaps of all the words we are every day employing, there is none which has a greater difficulty of meaning than this. We shall be aided, however, in discovering it, by some terms of kindred origin. Love and life and liberty are words which form only different branches from the same root, and express radically only different forms of the same idea. Let us seek therefore the meaning of life and of liberty, in order that we may find more widely and deeply the meaning of love. What then is life?

1. The first and most obvious conception of life is that of a power which unites many things into one. Behold the multitude

of parts in any living organism, and notice how complete the unity in which they are held together. They are very many, and yet they are one, so that the foot shall not say, Because I am not the hand I am not of the body; nor the ear say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; for the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body. This unity is not only of the most perfect sort, but there is nothing else in the natural world to equal it. No mechanical attractions nor chemical affinities, in their highest combinations, can produce a unity so complete. So incomparable and unrivaled is the power of life in this respect, that it has even been thought a perfect definition, when called the force which brings the diverse into harmony, and makes the many one. This is the working of life, and precisely such is the effect also of love. Love is the power which can bring different souls into union. However numerous and natively diverse, they are united and harmonized by love as perfectly as the manifold parts of a living structure are made one by the power which makes them alive. A soul that loves another is in a true sense one with the object of its love. A community penetrated by love, is held together in a unity as powerful and as permanent as its love. Behold two souls, a family, a church, thus affected, and is there any other union so complete as this? Nay, my brethren, is there any other union at all among men truly worthy of the name? I know there are partnerships in trade, associations of common pursuits or congenial tastes, but any such tie is as different from that which is made perfect by love, as the cord which binds up the sticks of a dead fagot differs from the force which unites the branches of a living tree. There is no union among human souls, except where they love one another, and where love is complete there is no diversity. The life which holds in unity the different parts of an organic structure is therefore but the type of the love which can join different souls together in a union as perfect as is the love.

2. But life is something more than this, and so also is love. In a living organism each part is at the same time the means and the end of all the rest. That vital principle which has united them in one body, gives to each one of its numberless parts a perfect reciprocity with every other. Every leaf, and branch, and root, and fiber of a living tree is working for each other one with all its power; it is the constant means or instrument of their perfection, while all the others join in paying it their tribute, as though it was the sole end or object of their activity. This is the working of life, and precisely so also of love. A soul that cleaves to another in love will seek that other's welfare, with an earnestness of endeavor proportioned to the strength of its attachment. A family, a church, a community, no matter how extended, united by love, and how perfect the interdependence and reciprocal communion of all its parts!

Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice together. In just the degree in which this state of communion or organic fellowship is wanting among men, is there a lack of love. We do not, can not love the soul whose well-being we are not seeking to subserve. We are not, can not be in true communion with the family or the church, or whatever association into which we come, unless each heart, with ceaseless throbbings, is pouring forth the currents of its life, for the sake of every other member. The life, therefore, which unites the different parts of an organic body, so that the eye can not say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you, is again but the type of the love which alone can truly organize society and make of human souls a fellowship wherein the welfare of each is the common interest of all.

3. But the most literal, and perhaps also the most characteristic meaning of life, is an inner energy which is constantly passing onward and reaching toward an end or consummation. Life is that which is always leaving the present, and ever advancing into the future. This is what is meant by the growth of a living thing. It passes away from its present condition into a more mature one; it leaves its state of to-day for the more advanced state where we find it to-morrow. The shrub grows till it becomes a tree. The child passes away from his childhood, and becomes a man. And this passing forward into the future, this reaching toward something different from what it has yet attained, is always seen in life up to the last point where we can trace it. The plant which dies, as we say, in its maturity, has ripened the seeds upon whose wings its living power can still pass onward, away from itself or its present being into the future. And the man who dies in old age is conscious of something within him which is still, as it ever has been, looking forward and reaching unto something yet beyond. This, I say, is the literal and perhaps the most characteristic meaning of life, and the literal meaning of love is precisely the same. Love is the passing outward and the reaching forward of one unto another. When it enters a soul, it will never suffer that soul to rest in or upon itself. Love is a power which fills the soul only that this fullness may be poured out upon some other object, toward which the soul is ever going forth in self-forgetfulness or self-devotion. As life never rests, but as the living being passes on continually from infancy to youth and mature age, and as even in its maturity there is still the reaching forward unto that which is beyond, so love is ever active, and the loving soul presses away toward the object of its love, tirelessly seeking that other's good and not its own, never resting until, like the dove upon the ark, it has ceased to poise itself upon its own pinions, and has found in something other than itself security and peace. Thus, as before, do we see that life is but

the representative of love, and thus in this, the highest conception we can form of life, we may say again, that love is life.

II. But though we have thus exhausted the conception of life, we have not yet attained the full meaning of love, for love is not only life, but liberty. What then is liberty? Liberty, in its most literal sense, is the power to pass away from self. The brute never can possess it. The law of his highest happiness, the impulse to go wherever the craving of appetite leads, controls him inevitably, according to the end of his own self-gratification. And man, in so far as he possesses a nature kindred to the brute, is no more free from a necessity in all his actions than is the bird or beast or creeping thing. Unless he has in his rational endowment something altogether different from a fleshy nature, unless there be something higher than happiness which he can seek, and something better than self-gratification which he can find, unless there be in self-denial a true alternative to self-indulgence, and he has the power of choice and action in respect of these, he has no freedom. For liberty of the will is just this power, the power of voluntary self-forgetfulness, and he is freest who can forget himself the most. Must not this be so? Am I really free, unless possessing the ability to deny as truly as to please myself? Is it liberty which must go only in the way in which our self-seeking impulses would guide us? Then, wherein has man more liberty than the brute? No, my brethren. Am I free to obey the highest law that can be laid upon me, the law of the Divine Master, that I take up my cross and follow him, unless I have the power to bear the cross, even as he also bore it, and be myself lifted up upon it as was also he? Is it liberty which makes such a mandate irksome? Is it the power of our freedom whereby we shrink from rendering it entire obedience? Nay, but does not all this fear and pain spring simply from the bondage wherein we are enslaved to self? If there were no fetters of selfish lust upon us, would the command to crucify the self be grievous? And if these fetters could be broken off, would not this be the true emancipation for the soul? The divine and perfect law demands the entire surrender of the self to God. This is alike the highest claim that can be made and the least service that can be accepted. But the power to render this obedience without constraint or sense of irksomeness, the power to give up self, not merely in uncomplaining, but in joyous self-devotion, what is this but the power of perfect freedom, the liberty for which the captive soul was made, and unto which, though bound by many fetters, it doth yet aspire?

This power of true self-forgetfulness in which genuine liberty consists, gives us a still wider view of love, for love is just this power. Nothing else, no law nor sense of obligation, can ever lead the soul to disregard self-interest, and yield itself in any way a contribution for another's good. But the work is easy for love. This is

love, its fullness, its blessedness, when the heart sends forth its currents of beneficence, not to have the streams return again, after many windings, to pour their fullness into the source which gave them birth, but which rejoices most of all in their returnless goings forth, knowing that it has within an exhaustless fountain welling up to everlasting life and liberty, because to everlasting love.

Such is love, in the highest apprehension we can attain respecting it, and that this is our true perfection, may most clearly appear. For whence comes the sense of imperfection, but from the want of love? When do we ever feel ashamed or degraded, but when some form of self-seeking, rather than of self-surrender, has been chosen? And when do we have the sense of royal dignity most gloriously, save when the foot is planted firmly on the neck of the vanquished self, and the freed spirit knows its freedom?

Love is our perfection, because it is our life and liberty. What a weary round we tread in all our duties; the law of the members warring against the law of the mind, and the body of death threatening to crush us, all because we are lacking in love! How hard it is to obey the divine mandate, how we shrink and strive to evade it, but how easy this would be, if we were only made living and free in love! "I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

Would it not make a wonderful difference with these duties which now so greatly harass us, if they could all be done in love? "Love is the fulfilling of the law." We can yield our wills in perfect loyalty to the divine commands, just when our hearts can beat responsively to God's love. If we can only look upward, and answer back his smile of love, as face answereth to face in a glass, it becomes no longer hard to do his will; tribulations or distresses for his sake cease to be a burden; there is no secret wish that the law should relax aught of its stern requirements, for the love has brought the law and the liberty into true accord, in the soul's perfect life. Be ye therefore love, even as your Father which is in heaven is love, for love is your perfection, even as it is his.

Does this seem altogether beyond our reach? Do we say it is high, we can not attain unto it? And yet we long for it. Down deep in every Christian soul burns the ceaseless aspiration for just this perfection. And is it not true, that the more we feel the want of it, and the greater the difficulty seems in the way of its attainment, so much the more do we yearn for its undisturbed possession? And can this yearning ever be filled and satisfied? May the dead heart be made alive, and the enslaved will emancipated, and the selfish soul become inspired with love? To the deep Christian experience, no question is so vital as this. Oh! that I knew where I might find this perfection, that I might come even to its seat, we say; but we grope for it in the darkness, groaning and travailing in pain together, and the groping and the groaning are all we seem to find. Oh! that

I had wings like a dove, that I might fly to such a blessed state, we exclaim; but the wings are wanting, and the weary feet clinging to earth can not bear us away. But still we do not give it over. We add our efforts to our aspirations. We pile up duties mountains high, and with toilsome step ascend the summit, seeking thus for power to leave the earth's attractions, and finding only that these attractions are just as binding here as they were before. The selfish soul is selfish still, notwithstanding all its duties, and yet it mysteriously clings to these, with unflinching eagerness and hope, after all their failures to release it. We know, and yet we all the time forget that our duties are dead, and our efforts are not free, while life and liberty are the very blessings which we seek to gain by these. What a transformation would be wrought in all our activity if it were only inspired by love, and yet how helpless all this activity is to gain for itself this inspiration! But the text aids us here, even by its seeming difficulty. If we are commanded to be perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, we may obey the command even because he is perfect. His perfection is the source of ours. His love gives us our love and life and liberty. We love him, says the Apostle John, because he first loved us. That which is impossible to man is possible to God. While the selfish soul can not warm itself into love, the light of God's shining upon it can kindle it abundantly unto a perfect life. All our selfishness, all our bondage, all remains of the body of death may be removed, when God's love shall be revealed. We shall be like him when we shall see him as he is, and because we shall see him as he is.

Behold the certainty of this result when God manifests his love in the Person and the works of his well-beloved Son. For see, what is the meaning of this amazing story of divine condescension and sacrifice? Why did he who was so rich become so poor? Why should adoring angels gaze upon their Lord coming forth from the throne and stooping in infinite humiliation to a subject's place? Why is that life so full of sorrow which is so free from sin? What makes that heart so solitary where such deep and tender sympathies abound? Why is he such a lowly, wandering outcast, one in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and whose every word and work was penetrated with a majesty so truly divine? Why that unutterable agony in the garden, that bitter ignominy in the council-hall—the mock trial, the buffeting and reviling, the bended knee and purple robe and crown of thorns? Why that crucifixion scene which the sun refused to look upon, and at which the very earth quaked as though in terror, when He whose rightful place was the throne of glory hung expiring upon the cross of shame? Truly, we exclaim with the centurion, truly this was the Son of God. But why was all this? And when the answer comes, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life—when we learn that he who was so rich became poor, in order that we through his poverty might become rich; when we see that all this stupendous sacrifice was not to increase the blessedness of Him who made it, but solely to raise to eternal life those for whom it was made; when we come to know something of the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God which passeth knowledge, then it is that we become filled with all the fullness of God, and find a power within us hitherto unknown to will and to do of his good pleasure. When we ask of what need was this little world to Him who hath made Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the South, and of what consequence this feeble race to Him to whom the thousand thousands minister, and before whom ten thousand times ten thousand stand, of angels who excel in strength and hearken unto the voice of his word; when we learn our own defilement, our want of love and purity, our fullness of guilt and sin and shame, and ask what are we that Christ should be mindful of us, and then realize that in all our weakness and worthlessness he loved us and gave himself through bitter shame and sorrow to die for us, there is a power in this love which we can not overcome. It overcomes us. It melts, it subdues and kindles within us something in its own likeness. We can stand out against the law, we can resist every commandment, and have done it, though we have known that they were true and righteous altogether; but who can resist the power of the love of the Son of God? Does not love always seek and secure its counterpart? Who can steel himself even against human love? Let it be pure and devoted, self-renouncing and self-forgetting, and where is the heart which can bar itself from its approach and refuse to respond to it with kindred affection? I have only to know, even among human relations, that there is one heart that loves me so deeply that it would give up its dearest interests for my good, and though I have scorned and hated and bitterly injured it hitherto, its love shall fill me with self-reproaches, with penitence, with confession, with gratitude, with love. And this is something I can neither choose nor refuse. It goes deeper than my will, and makes me willing in the day of its power. And thus when the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto men; when he awakens in any man the clear consciousness that Christ died not simply for the race, but for him, as truly for him as though he stood alone the only object of the great redemption—this individualizing sense of Christ's work, this self-appropriation of the fullness of his love—what is this but faith, the gift of God, which worketh by love, which purifies and thus renews the heart? Faith is as inseparable from love as the light from the warmth of a sunbeam. It is not then any strange or arbitrary condition set to the reception of the Gospel blessings, but the true and only way in which the life of the Gospel could

enter and dwell within us. This is eternal life, said the Saviour, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; eternal life, because it is the knowledge of eternal love, which when we gaze upon it changes us into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.

It may be that we can not explain in any words beyond the simple statement of the fact, how this is wrought. "The kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow up, he knoweth not how." We can not tell how it is that the linen spread out beneath the sunlight whitens to the likeness of the light that falls upon it—neither do we know how the soul becomes radiant like the glory which fills its raptured vision, but, in either case, the undimmed sun, shining in the greatness of His strength, works the transformation. And can we do aught but bare our breasts unto this sunlight and say: Shine upon us, O Sun, with healing in thy beams; pour upon us richly thy divine effulgence; we wait and sigh for thine uprising?

The means of grace, therefore, without which every other means is useless, is a contemplation of God. We must seek to know more of him, if we would grow more into his likeness. The prayer of Moses—I beseech thee show me thy glory—is the universal prayer of the earnest Christian heart. The answer to it comprehends all other spiritual blessings. Strength to do or to suffer the divine will, zeal and earnestness and glowing joy in the Christian life, faith and hope and charity, all flow from this. No heart is cold which fully knows that God loves it and that Christ has died for it. No soul can keep its selfishness which feels itself the immediate object of divine and eternal love. We are thus to seek this knowledge till we shall clearly and completely gain it. That which we at first receive by faith, and grasp dimly, as God reveals it to us, but for which we can not see the reason, ought to be treasured up so closely and pondered on so well, that it should become no longer faith, but knowledge—no longer a truth whose source is hid, whose basis is beyond our reach, but one whose very ground is clearly seen and firmly rested on. It ought not to seem strange to us that God loves us. We should rise—and we may—from the first vague faith of the babe in Christ to the completed knowledge of the matured experience, which sees a sufficient reason for God's love in God himself. "It is just like him," said an old, converted heathen woman, to whom God had revealed himself so intimately and with such surpassing glory, that the highest statements made respecting him gave her no surprise. And so clear a knowledge and intimate a communion with God ought to be so fully our possession that when he shall lead us on from grace to grace, and from one degree of glorious manifestation to another, there shall be seen to be in each preceding step a preparation for

that which was to come, and we can look up to him, exclaiming: Thou knowest, O Father, that we did not doubt thy love and all-sufficiency, for thou hast given us copious prelibations of this feast, full foreshinings of this glory, in which our joy has been, as it still so deeply is, unspeakable and full of glory. Thus do we "come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we, henceforth, be no more children."

This knowledge of God is our greatest boon, and we are to seek to know him, that we may know him. But the way is not so difficult, nor the distance so remote, as many of our unbelieving thoughts and ways would indicate. "For this commandment, which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it." God is very near to that soul to which his Spirit has taken and made known the things of Christ. God must be near to the soul that he loves. If that soul, once enkindled by his love, to whom, in the joy of its first espousals, it yielded in glad and spontaneous embrace, has been chilled by returning selfishness, and finds that the lusts which it thought were vanquished are seeking again for dominion, God has not left its side, though it has turned away its face from him. He waits, he watches over it, and yearns for the averted eyes again to turn and meet his own. In the night, and while the soul is sleeping, he knocks, and whispers: "Open to me, my sister, my love, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." He is ever more desirous to give us his gracious manifestations than we are willing to receive them. It is his glory to be good. We express his eternal excellency when we say that he is love; and we are filled with all his fullness when we know the height and depth and length and breadth of his love, which passeth knowledge.

I said, at the outset of the discourse, that it is difficult fully to recognize the conception of love, and it is just this difficulty which makes it so hard to realize the application of God's love to us. We are so selfish, so certain to set a price upon our gifts, that we hesitate before we receive the inestimable boon of the divine love, without money and without price. And if we have received it, and been quickened at all by its throbbings, we instinctively cloud the apprehension of it, and suffer the currents of the new life to grow slack, while we seek in something which we can do for a requital of it. But the love of God would not be love, if it could be recompensed otherwise than in the blessedness of its

all-sufficient exercise. And we dim its glory just so far as we undertake to repay it. It is not in what we return, but in what we receive, that the love of God finds its eternal joy. And all the activity of holy devotion, to which his love kindles us, is directed by him, and is well pleasing to him, only because it deepens our capacity to receive him, and widens the channels through which he can pour his fullness upon us.

Yes, my brethren, we must keep out the notion, although it strives to enter in every moment, that any toil, or sacrifice, or self-devotion, unto which he calls us, is to be given in payment for love which we have already received, or to purchase still more which we hope to obtain. The love is freely given, and freely it must be received. All those works of Christian enterprise whereby a loving Church seeks to spread abroad the glory of the Lord she loves, make the Church more sensible of this glory—open her eye more clearly to behold it, and render her heart more ready to receive its more abundant displays; and this is why they are commanded. Does he need the service? Has he not the troops of lofty ones, in all places of his dominion, that do his pleasure—the ministering spirits which excel in strength, and hearken unto the voice of his word—and does he need our service? Nay, is not the residue of the Spirit with him, and has he to do aught but to blow with his breath upon the dry bones, and they shall come again together, and sinews and flesh shall clothe them, and they shall stand up with new bodies and a new life, an exceeding great army, and does he need any thing that we can do? Oh! no, but we need it perishingly. We can not grow without this service. It is the way in which he blesses us, the process by which he educates us, and the means whereby we grow unto a more interior fellowship with him. God's sovereignty is not for his own sake, but for ours. He did not need a throne or scepter, but he could not pour on us his love, except as he made us subject unto him. And the more we realize this love, the more shall we welcome every commandment as we would a benediction, for we shall then see that the river of the water of our life, clear as crystal, could proceed only from his throne.

But not alone, Christian friends, in those interior manifestations of his Spirit to our souls, nor in those duties whereby he teaches us still more his love, are we to contemplate our Father in heaven, if we would be perfect as he is perfect. He reveals himself in every providence, and we need to accustom ourselves to hear his voice and feel his heart in every incident of life. Does even not a sparrow fall to the ground without his notice, and are not the hairs of our heads all numbered, and does he not regard each momentary thought or care or need of those who are of more value than many sparrows? Doth he clothe the lily, and give to the beast his food, and satisfy the wants of every living thing, and shall he

not much more clothe and feed and satisfy us, whom he has made in his own image, that he might bestow on us far larger blessings than the natural world could receive? He will do this. He is doing it for us every day. He never forgets it, and never lacks the power or will.

All the events of life, all our joys or sorrows, are but forms in which he manifests his love to us. At first they may appear, as he does to the natural eye, without form or comeliness, and with no beauty that we should desire them; but when we come to see them as they are, they are clothed with loveliness—when our distrust gives way to faith, and our faith changes into knowledge, and we find in every scene and moment some new evidence of that grace which maketh all things work together for good to us, we may come to take pleasure in distresses, in reproaches, in persecutions, for Christ's sake; we may glory in our infirmities and tribulations that the power of Christ may rest upon us, knowing that only when we are weak, then are we strong; that only when emptied of self, are we filled with the Divine Love; that only when crucified with Christ do we truly live. In the ordering of our affairs, God is near us, and speaks to us, and waits to show himself to the watching eye. The history of every soul is a constant manifestation of God's perfection. Who of us can closely trace the record of a single day's experience, and not find it full of the evidence of God's unwearied patience and exhaustless love? It is only because we keep our eyes shut, that we do not see this, and are not filled thereby with adoration, admiration, praise, and love.

But though our Father in heaven reveals that perfection whose vision is to change us into its own likeness, in all these ways it is in his word and in his Son Jesus Christ that we are chiefly to behold this glory. The more any soul ponders and dwells upon the interior fullness of the Bible, the more profoundly we enter into its depths and become penetrated with its spirit, the more clear and unalterable is the conviction that it is a true revelation from God. The Bible carries in itself the perfect and perpetual witness to its truth. Criticism does not impair this witness. All attacks upon it do not weaken it at all. There is that in the depths of every soul which utters the responsive yea and amen to all the teachings of the Bible. And if we really desire to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect; if we would grow in his likeness by the only way in which the transformation can be wrought—by a contemplation of himself—we shall have much study of the sacred Scriptures, until by ceaseless meditation on them the word of Christ shall come to dwell richly in us, in all wisdom, filling us with peace by the faith with which it inspires us, and making us pure by the perfect love with which it liberates us from self and raises us from death unto the newness of the perfect life. We shall grow

in grace, just as we grow in the knowledge which all these sources give us of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And, O friends in this congregation! if such there be anxious to find this knowledge—O babes in Christ! if such there be new born through its finding—O disciples of Christ! long taught in this heavenly wisdom—O heirs of glory! who are waiting for the crown—may the Lord himself lead you unto the perfect acquaintance with himself; may he take away the vail which hides his face, and give you the clear eye to look on him, till “we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Amen.